

Our Future ENC

Jones, Greene, Duplin, Pamlico, Lenoir,
Wayne, Craven, Onslow, and Carteret Counties

Collaborative Case Study

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What is Our Future ENC?

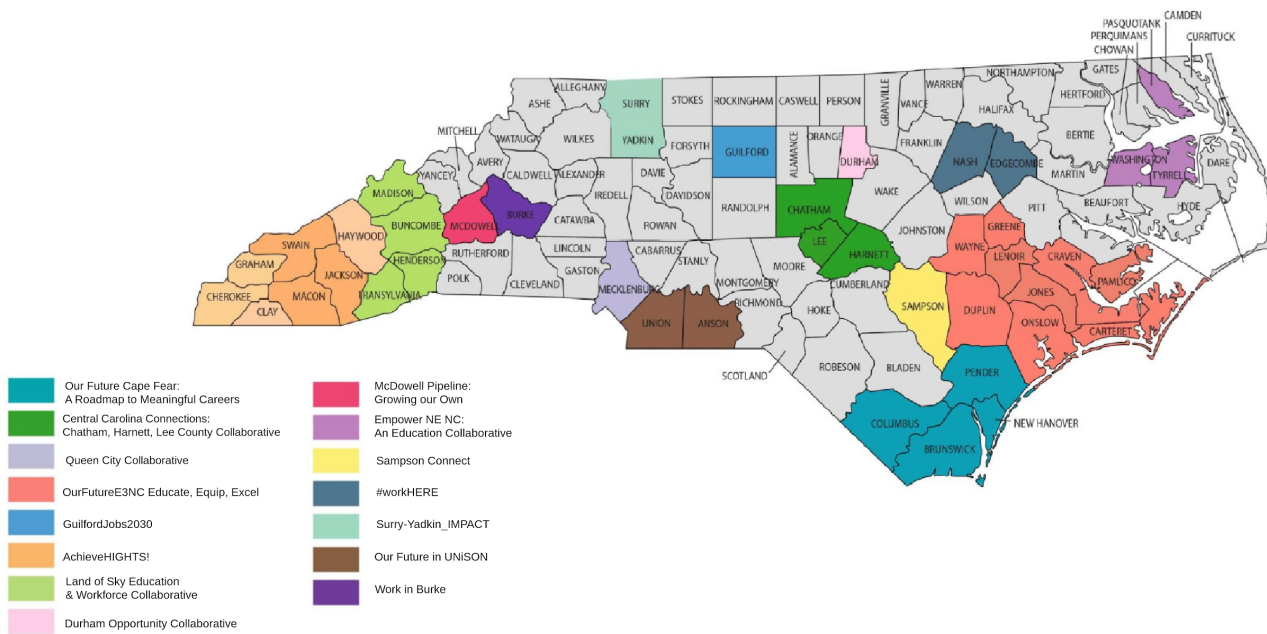
Our Future ENC is a myFutureNC Local Educational Attainment Collaborative (LEAC) that brings together stakeholders across nine counties to increase credential attainment in Eastern North Carolina.





Relationships and Connections: Primary Partners

myFutureNC Local Educational Collaboratives



Carteret Community College

Works with students and local school systems to increase student retention and credential attainment in Carteret County and surrounding areas.

Eastern Carolina Workforce Development Board

Coordinates the efforts of workforce development stakeholders to boost educational attainment in the region.

Wayne Community College

Works with students and local school systems to increase student retention and credential attainment in Wayne County and surrounding areas.





Practices and Outcomes

Our Future ENC has coordinated efforts across nine counties to establish the foundational practices of sharing resources and brainstorming strategies to achieve the region's educational attainment goals. "Pulling together nine counties with a common goal and working together has been incredible," says Merianne Grigoriuc, director of counseling, retention, and disability services for Carteret Community College. "We've maintained sight of what our vision is—to continue to impact the credential attainment in our region—even though we have a lot of different needs in our collaborative."

Previously, the nine counties did not collaborate regularly, and multiple organizations were working on the same issues. "We didn't know what each group was doing," says Phillip Prescott, assistant director of the Eastern Carolina Workforce Development Board.

"Working together helps us understand what our similarities and differences are so we can accomplish shared goals."

The LEAC has already undertaken two important initiatives. First, it established a process for community colleges to receive local school systems' dropout lists. College staff can then intercept and recruit those dropouts into pathways or credentialing programs. Our Future ENC is expanding this work by participating in nCIMPACT's Our State Our Work program (see details below).

Second, motivated by its peer learning with other LEACs, the collaborative hosted an in-person convening of regional workforce development leaders to present myFutureNC data and facilitate a conversation about what each county could do to move forward. "The energy in the room was electric," says Renita Allen Dawson, vice president for workforce continuing education at Wayne Community College. "I'm excited to see what can be done to continue the momentum." Convening workforce partners is a key part of the effort to disseminate myFutureNC scorecards and secure greater buy-in to address regional educational attainment issues.



Policies and Other Barriers

The main barrier to growing the collaborative's footprint is not policy but identifying individuals willing and able to commit the time to participate meaningfully and consistently. There is no shortage of people who support the goal, but the challenge is finding stakeholders with the bandwidth to help steer the committee's work in a leadership capacity. To address this challenge, the collaborative is focused on recruiting new organizations uniquely positioned to reach the desired audiences and highly motivated to make an immediate impact. For example, the collaborative now works with libraries, which can directly provide resources and programming to those seeking training and workforce opportunities.

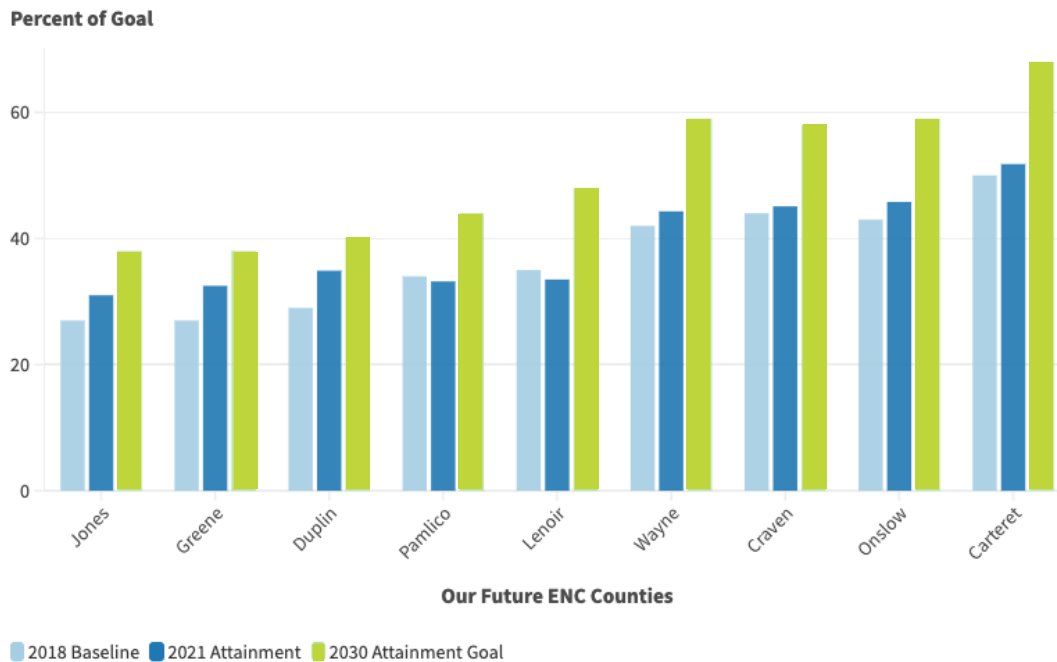
Another challenge is related to messaging. “We need to understand who we’re talking to,” says Grigoriuc, “and ensure we’re tailoring our message to their motivations so we can secure their involvement.” To develop messaging that appeals to stakeholders, the LEAC uses its regular meetings to address the target audience’s shared challenges and motivations and learn from one another across the nine-county region about messages that work.



Resource Flows and Sustainability

This LEAC is using its participation in Our State Our Work (OSOW) programming to help build greater on-the-ground capacity. OSOW is a similar cross-sector collaborative model facilitated by nIMPACT that focuses on connecting Opportunity Youth (young adults ages 16-24 who are neither in school nor working) to pathways that offer living wage jobs. By participating in OSOW, leaders can focus on a particular demographic and deliver a plan to inform, engage, and train individuals and agencies to sustain the collaborative’s work.

myFutureNC Local Educational Attainment Collaboratives Measuring Progress





Mental Models and Power Dynamics

Our Future ENC seeks to involve nontraditional partners in its work. The collaborative is “thinking outside the box,” says Grigoriuc. “We are not just inviting government officials to participate. We are reaching out to people and organizations that might not be typically involved in this type of work to garner interest in the LEAC and convince them it’s important to work on our shared educational attainment goals.” Inviting previously overlooked parties to participate in the LEAC has allowed the collaborative to be hyper-focused on specific populations at each moment instead of trying to “lift all boats at once,” says Prescott.

This is reflected in their participation in OSOW. The LEAC has identified Opportunity Youth as a target population that would benefit from the effective collaboration between community colleges and school districts. Through an innovation mini-grant, the collaborative is creating promising practices for reaching and engaging this population of young people and bringing them into the enhanced systems that have been created.

